



Fonda with NH Fishing License

Fonda Enjoyed Lakes Region Stay

By GORDON D. KING

CENTRE HARBOR — Henry Fonda, who played an old man facing death in the movie "On Golden Pond," longed to return to his New Hampshire golden pond, Squam Lake, to fish and relax but knew he never would.

"Shirlee and I dream of returning to New Hampshire because it's such a magical place. But I know we never will," he wrote in a letter to

FONDA, Page Two

Fonda

From Page 1

Charlene Joyce of New Hampton, a production assistant on the film crew.

Joyce said she received the letter in which the film star indicated his failing health would probably deny him a return trip two weeks ago.

"I thank God I had the opportunity to work with a professional like him," Joyce added.

Henry Fonda, one of America's greatest screen and stage stars, died peacefully Thursday morning at Cedars Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles of heart failure. His wife, Shirlee, who also fell in love with New Hampshire, was at his bedside.

Fonda, who received an Oscar for his role of Harry Thayer Jr. in the movie, expressed his love of the state to several Lakes Region area residents who became friendly with him while he was here.

"When he arrived, he took a deep breath and felt right at home," said Mead Farm resident William Mead Jr. Most of the movie was filmed at a cottage within the confines of the Mead property.

Mead, who said he was impressed with Fonda's simplicity and humaness, said the movie star felt comfortable here. "He became totally immersed in the area. He lived his movie role in reality," Mead said.

Pat Curtin of Laconia, who provided the boats used in the movie, described Fonda as "a professional but a shy guy who didn't have much to say." Curtin last saw the Fondas in Stamford, Conn. where Henry was appearing in a play after the movie was completed.

"I gave him a fishing rod as a present," Curtin said. "He really enjoyed fishing and planned to come back." Curtin said Fonda was in poor health at the time.

The Oscar winner also indicated his love of the Lakes Region to Robert Dearborn of Emerald Owl Ann-Teeks, a Laconia antique shop where the Fondas made several purchases.

"Henry wanted to return to New Hampshire

very much, just to fish and relax. He loved this area," Dearborn said.

One of Dearborn's treasured possessions is a program from "Adobe Motel," the play Henry appeared in at the Stamford theater. The message the film star wrote above his signature reads: "Bob, I wish I was back in New Hampshire."

Dearborn remembers the film great as "an easy going guy who was very easy to converse with." Similar thoughts were expressed by Malcolm "Tink" Taylor, Squam Lakes Association president.

"He much preferred to eat lunch with members of the crew — the roustabouts, cameramen, sound people. He just sat down among them and was right at home," Taylor said.

"He was very much a people person. That was not your usual image of a famous actor who had made 85 pictures," Taylor said.

Taylor described Fonda as a person who became a part of the landscape in the short time he was here. "We feel we've lost an old timer," he added.

Mead said "Fonda made no special event of himself even though he was a famous actor." Mead recalled the scene from the movie where Fonda's character suffered a heart attack.

The scene called for Fonda and his co-star Katharine Hepburn to be alone on the front porch of the Chalmers' camp where most of the movie was filmed.

"From the way he performed you could just tell it was the real thing, not an act, for he had suffered several heart attacks himself," Mead recalled.

Fonda died from complications due to those heart attacks. All those who worked with him have fond memories of Henry. They also have souvenirs from the movie or gifts from Fonda. Several received lithographed copies of the painting Fonda did of the hats he wore during the movie's production.

Curtin has one souvenir which is very special to him. It is the bent three-bladed propeller from Thayer IV, the boat which crashed into the rocks in the mythical Purgatory Cove on Fonda's golden pond. The blades have been autographed by Katharine Hepburn, Henry Fonda, and his daughter, Jane Fonda, who played a supporting role in the movie as his daughter.

In accordance with his wishes, Fonda's eyes were donated to the Manhattan Eye Institute. His body was cremated shortly after he died. His wife said there would be no funeral as he had requested. The family has not decided what to do with his remains.